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Mercenaries' Hiring Denied

The administration yesterday denied a report by the Christian Science Monitor that the Central Intelligence Agency has recruited an American mercenary force of 600 to fight in the Angolan civil war.

The White House, State Department and CIA each issued separate denials of the Monitor story as "false," utterly without foundation" and "total nonsense.'

However, White House press secretary Ron Nessen would not comment on whether the United States is training, hiring or financing mercenaries from countries other than America.

During the Indochina war the administration hired third-country "volunteers" to get around congressional restrictions on the use of U.S. funds to pay for foreign troops.

Nessen also refused to discuss an assertion in the Monitor story that Ft. Benning, Ga., was being used as a training base for personnel who might go to Angola.

He did issue an unqualified denial, however, that any U.S. government agency was recruiting, hiring or training American mercenaries for the Angolan civil war. He added, in response to questions, that "as far as I know, no private company or contractor is hiring American mercenaries for combat duty." In response to another question Nessen said he did not know whether any private concern might be hiring technicians or advisers.

The newspaper, quoting "senior mercenary officers," said that some 300 Americans are fighting in Angola alongside the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and that another 300 are currently waiting to join them.

The Americans were being employed, the Monitor said, to help contain the recent advances of the Soviet-supported Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA)

Nessen said, "It's no secret the United States is giving modest amounts of assistance to some African countries." Asked whether the assistance was being used in the Angolan fighting, he said there is "no way of knowing precisely how that money is spent to the very last cent."

RON NESSEN
. . .no Americans recruited

Sparkman Fears Soviet Angola Role

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Newhouse News Service

The chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee says he hopes the Soviet Union does not get bogged down in a war in Angola like the United States did in Vietnam.

"That may sound strange," said Sen. John J Sparkman (D-Ala.), "but I just would hate to see Russia take action there that might hav a strong pull on us to offset it."

Sparkman said he fears that the civil war in the newly independent Southwest African nation "could very well become the quicksand" for the Soviet Union.

He said he is "rather afraid" of the situation that has developed in Angola since Portugal gave up 500 years of colonial rule there last November

He said he supports the use of "limited CIA funds in Angola, but I don't believe we ought to move in there with any armed force or anything of that kind and take sides."

The Senate voted just before its Christmas recess to deny further U.S aid to the warring factions in Agola The House is expected to take up the question soon after Congress returns to work Jan. 19.

Sparkman believes the Ford administration should seek negotiations with the Russians on Angola "tied in with detente"